

Characters

HOWARD A CAUCASIAN. A TRAVEL WRITER VISITING HAWAII.

SAM A LOCAL MAN IN HIS THIRTIES. BURLY, GOATEE, LONG HAIR TO SHOULDERS, LOOKS MENACING.

LANI GRAY-HAIRED, FRIENDLY-LOOKING GRANDMOTHER TYPE. ACTUALLY SHE IS A GHOST, PLAYED BY A PUPPET.

SARAH A BEAUTIFUL LOCAL WOMAN IN HER TWENTIES. ALSO A GHOST AND PLAYED BY A PUPPET.

KUROKOS TO HELP ON STAGE (if needed).

KUROKOS ARE BLACK-DRESSED AND -HOODED STAGE HANDS USED IN KABUKI THEATER.

LANI AND SARAH ARE LARGER-THAN-LIFE PUPPETS WITH ACTORS INSIDE. .

OPTIONAL: KUROKO MAY STAND OUTSIDE PUPPET WHILE HANDLING IT.

Act

LAVA by EDWARD SAKAMOTO

SETTING: A BLEAK LANDSCAPE OF BLACK LAVA IN VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII. MOUNDS OF LAVA OF VARIOUS SIZES DOT THE AREA.

HOWARD ENTERS, LOST, BEWILDERED AND TIRED. HE CARRIES A KNAPSACK ON HIS BACK, WEARS A LONG-SLEEVE SHIRT ROLLED UP TO THE ELBOWS, KHAKI SHORTS AND SNEAKERS.

HE TAKES OFF THE KNAPSACK AND DRAGS IT AROUND THE STAGE, SEARCHING FOR ANY SIGN OF LIFE.

HE COMES DOWNSTAGE AND YELLS, FACING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

HOWARD

Cindy! Lennie! Can you hear me? Where are you? Cindy, stop playing games! What the hell you doing? C'mon! Lennie! I'm tired . . . thirsty . . . I . . . Where the . . . ?

HE EYES THE HORIZON, TURNING IN A CIRCLE TILL HE FINALLY COMES BACK FACING FRONT.

Okay, okay, I give up, you win. Cindy, you hear me? I am your slave! I bow to your whatever. Come out, will you? Okay, I'm gonna say it. Okay? Please. Please don't fool around anymore. That's it. Please.

(Pause)

H-e-e-e-l-l-p-p-p-p! Somebody! H-e-e-e-e-l-l-l-l-l-p-p-p-p-p! I'm going to die. I'm going to die here and nobody'll find me for thousands of years. They'll think I was some kind of missing link. They'll pick over my bone fragments and fit me together like some stupid jigsaw puzzle. "Hmmm, here we have a Caucasoid, 5-foot-9. Had beautiful teeth, not one cavity. A magnificent specimen of his time."

HOWARD

(cont')

Great, just great. They'll display my bones in a glass case in some drab museum. I'll be exposed to the whole world, whatever kind of world it'll be three thousand years from now. Little good that'll do me.

(Looks around)

Why is there so much lava?

HOWARD TAKES OFF HIS SHIRT, WRAPS IT INTO A BALL AND HURLS IT TO THE GROUND. HE SCRATCHES THE BACK OF HIS HEAD, SMELLS UNDER HIS ARM PIT. HE DIGS INTO HIS KNAPSACK AND COMES UP WITH A SMALL AEROSOL CAN, WHICH HE SPRAYS AT BOTH ARM PITS, THEN RETURNS IT TO THE BAG.

HE PUTS HIS SHIRT BACK ON, THEN LOOKS INTO HIS KNAPSACK AND COMES UP WITH A LOLLIPOP. HE PICKS AT THE LINT ON THE LOLLIPOP AND DROPS IT BACK IN THE BAG.

HOWARD

H-e-e-e-e-l-l-l-l-l-p-p-p-p!

FROM FAR OFFSTAGE COMES:

SAM

Wat?

HOWARD IS SURPRISED. HE LOOKS AROUND TRYING TO LOCATE THE VOICE. HE FACES OFFSTAGE LEFT.

HOWARD

Help!

SAM

Wat?

HOWARD TURNS TO HIS RIGHT.

HOWARD

I said "HELP!"

SAM

(offstage)

(getting closer)

I said "Wat?"

HOWARD

(Facing left)

This way! Follow my voice! Here! Here! Thank God! Come on! Where are you?

SAM

(offstage)

Ova here!

HOWARD

You're getting closer! Don't stop! Keep coming this way! This way!

SAM ENTERS FROM LEFT. HE'S A LOCAL GUY, IN A FADED ALOHA SHIRT, JEANS AND RUBBER SLIPPERS. WEARS HAIR TO SHOULDERS; HAS A MUSTACHE AND GOATEE.

SAM

You calling me?

HOWARD TURNS AROUND SURPRISED.

HOWARD

Oh. Yes. I was going, a little, you know . . . Where're the others? Did Lennie and Cindy send you? Sure, they must've. Thank you, thank you.

SAM

Wat you t'anking me fo'?

HOWARD

For rescuing me.

SAM

Rescue you? Oh.

HOWARD

I know this is crazy. Me, getting lost, I mean . . . But I'm only visiting, you see, so . . . I'm from Maryland. And my friends said, "Hey, let's go to Volcanoes National Park." And I said, "What for? It's only lava." But my girl Cindy and my best pal Lennie. They wanted to come here, not me. Really, you know . . . Hey, I don't give a damn about volcanoes. We got 'em in the Mainland, no big deal.

HOWARD

(cont')

I know, I know, I shouldn't talk this way. I'm supposed to be big on culture. I'm a free-lance writer--travel

articles, that kind of thing.

SAM LOOKS AT HOWARD WITH DEADENED EYES.

Well, somebody has to write 'em. Okay, I'm a little cynical, yeah but . . . I'm good at it. I make a living. I write things like: "I stood in the middle of a desert dream as towering Joshua trees with arms reach out to me, a beckoning gesture of welcome."

SAM STARES BLANKLY AT HOWARD.

(Pause)

You know for a minute, just a minute, I thought I was doomed. Like this was cemetery city. Boy, was I glad to see you.

SAM ISN'T LISTENING. HE'S SEARCHING THE AREA, LOOKING IN THE DISTANCE.

HOWARD

Ah, well, maybe we should go. My friends are probably worried. What'd they say? Were they anxious, did they seem, like, worried sick? My girl Cindy, she can't stand being away from me. She has to be with me all the time. I don't know about you, but when a girl loves you so madly, well, it can be suffocating. Oh, by the way, my name's Howard.

HOWARD EXTENDS HIS HAND. SAM IGNORES HIM AND SITS ON A BOULDER.

SAM

We still get time.

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah, I guess so but . . .

SAM

Which way you wen' come?

HOWARD

Which . . . way . . . I . . . went . . . come? Which way I went come? Which way did I come from?

SAM

'S wat I said.

HOWARD

Ah, that way.

HE POINTS UPSTAGE LEFT.

SAM

Wat you wen' see dat side?

HOWARD

What I went see that side?

SAM

Wat you, one echo?

HOWARD

What did I see? Right? Well, I saw lava, lots and lots of lava rock.

SAM

You neva see one house in da distance o' someting li' dat?

HOWARD

House? No, if I'd seen one, I would've walked to it.

SAM

How 'bout people?

HOWARD

People? God, no. I only wish. I've been roaming around here I don't know how long, trying to get outta here, trying to find my way back to the Volcano House. It's wacky, really wacky. I was walking with my girl Cindy and my pal Lennie.

HOWARD

(cont')

Then I turned around and they were gone. I don't know what happened. Ah, do you mind if we go? I'm getting antsy. I wanna see my friends. I need my friends. I didn't think I would ever say that but yeah. You lead the way and I'll follow.

SAM

You not going no place.

HOWARD

Why? . . . I mean, why? Is it . . . Wait. No, no. Wait, you can have all the money in my wallet. It's not much. Here. Only a few dollars but . . . Just . . . just don't kill me.

SAM

Easy, brah. I no like your money.

HOWARD

What? If you don't want my money, what do you want? . . . My body? You want my body? I draw the line there, hey, I really mean it. I don't do that kind of, of, ah, ah, hanky-panky.

SAM

Nah, nah, wat you tink me? Mahu o' wat? I jus' like get outta here.

HOWARD

Yeah? Well, what's the problem? Let's go.

SAM

Which way?

HOWARD

What do you mean? That way, the way you came.

SAM

Fo'get it, nuttin' out dat way.

HOWARD

But I don't understand. You . . . you--

SAM

I try go dis way, I try go dat way. I dunno where I stay go.

HOWARD

You dunno where you stay go? You . . . dunno . . . where . . . you . . . stay . . . go? What the hell does that mean?

SAM

Aeh, you no unnastand English o' wat?

HOWARD

Stay? Go? You giving me a choice? I don't wanna stay! I wanna go!

SAM

You like go, go! Nobody stopping you.

HOWARD

But you have to show me the way.

SAM

I wen' jus' tell you. I dunno where I stay go.

HOWARD

Wait a minute, wait a minute, we're right back where we started. You saying you're lost too?

SAM

Aeh, brah, about time you get da message.

HOWARD

Great. Just great. I don't believe you.

SAM

I not shitting you.

HOWARD

But you're a local guy, right?

SAM

Born right here on da Big Island. Only place I eva live. I neva even go Kauai, Maui, Oahu. Only dis island. Da Big Island. Good ting dis island is big, get plenny places to go.

HOWARD

Okay, okay. You know your way around here.

SAM

I know dis place like da palm of my hand.

HOWARD

So what's the problem, for crissake.

SAM

Now everyting look like da back of my hand.

HOWARD

How can that be?

SAM

No ask me. I been trying to find my way out too. But every place I go, look like every place else.

HOWARD

So why're you acting so damn casual? Aren't you worried?

SAM

Aeh, man, you looking at one guy who is scared shitless.

HOWARD PLOPS ON THE GROUND BEWILDERED. HE COVERS HIS FACE WITH HIS HANDS, SHAKING HIS HEAD.

Da funny ting is, I been in dis volcano park so many times I no can count, and dis da firs' time I wen' get lost. Funny, eh.

HOWARD

I'm not laughing.

SAM

You get someting fo' eat?

HOWARD

What?

SAM

Eat, eat. I hungry. You get food?

HOWARD

You wanna eat now? What the fuck's the matter with you? We're lost and desperate and we may die and you wanna eat?

SAM

Aeh, no swear at me, eh. You like beef o' wat?

HOWARD

Beef? Yeah, I like beef. T-bone steak hot from the grill, prime rib, diamond cut, medium rare. I love beef, but not now. Now I just wanna get outta here.

SAM

Wen I said you like beef, dat means you like fight o' wat?

HOWARD

You got a problem communicating, you know that?

SAM

You making fun da way I talk?

HOWARD

No, no, I don't wanna fight you. We gotta find our way out together. We gotta help each other. Is anything getting through your coconut?

SAM

'S it, man, you asking fo' it. Now I going knock off your coconut.

HOWARD

Wait, I forgot. I do have something to eat.

HOWARD DIGS INTO HIS BAG AND COMES UP WITH THE LOLLIPOP.

Here, take this. It's the last one. You can have it. An offering of friendship.

SAM

Lollipop? 'S all you get?

SAM PICKS AT THE LOLLIPOP, TRYING TO REMOVE THE LINT.

Get plenny lint on dis.

HOWARD

Lint won't kill you. It'll turn into a little fur ball in your stomach and pass through your system.

SAM PICKS OFF AS MUCH LINT AS HE CAN, THEN SUCKS ON THE LOLLIPOP.

You're lucky to get that. I just happened to find it. Left over from a trip to Yosemite.

SAM

Wen was dat? Las' month?

HOWARD

Nah, eight years ago.

SAM TAKES OUT THE LOLLIPOP, GAGS AND SPITS.

SAM

You wen' give me one 8-year-old lollipop?

HOWARD

It's edible.

SAM

I no like eat 8-year-old candy. You like I get sick o' wat?

SAM THROWS THE CANDY AT HOWARD.

HOWARD

Hey, it's only sugar and Red Dye No` 9 . . . Ah, this may be a silly question, but you think somebody will find

us before it's too late?

SAM

No problem. Especially if your friends wen' fo' help. No sweat.

HOWARD

What about your friends?

SAM

I no mo' friends.

HOWARD

You married?

SAM

No, why? Bodda you?

HOWARD

Hell no, I don't care. I just wondered if you lived with somebody.

SAM

Yeah, my grandfaddah. I live wit' da bugga all my life. Teach me everyting I know.

HOWARD

He taught you English too?

SAM

Of course, wat you tink? Da bugga smart. He told me, "Aeh, no need go school already, I teach you all about life." So I was lucky and quit school. Now all I do is watch TV wen I not busy or talk to my grandfaddah. Sometimes I no see nobody fo' days. But no bodda me. I no need friends.

HOWARD

Well, I need my friends. You know everything was fine earlier today. Cindy. Lennie, me. We were having a good time laughing and walking along that big crater. Sulphur smoke pouring out, everywhere looking so desolate. Like the end of the world. Nobody left but us. And I thought, it's "The Planet of the Apes."

HOWARD

(cont')

Then I came out of all that smoke, and Cindy and Lennie were gone. They disappeared. I mean, they were right next to me. Wait, no, maybe they were a couple of steps behind. Ah . . . yeah, behind and to my right. Or my left . . . I was thinking . . . what if they don't want me found?

SAM

Wat?

HOWARD

Maybe they want me dead. That's why they wanted to go to Volcanoes National Park. Yes, it's beginning to make sense. They were acting strange. Sometimes I caught them whispering to each other. Then I thought they were planning a surprise birthday party for me.

SAM

Dat sounds okay.

HOWARD

Except my birthday is six months away.

SAM

So you tink Cindy and Lennie like get rid of you, so dey can fool around?

HOWARD

Why not?

SAM

Fo' wat? You not married to Cindy. Dey can jus' take off, and you no can do nuttin'.

HOWARD

But the revenge factor. They must've considered that. They knew I would track them down and make them pay.

SAM

No give me dat. No wahine wort' dat much.

HOWARD

Wahine? That means woman, right? See, I'm trying. I'm not one of those Ugly Americans who don't give a damn about local culture.

SAM

Yeah, yeah, kiss my okole. Tell me dis--your girlfriend wen' get some insurance on you?

HOWARD

I see what you mean. Life insurance. I'm dead and they live it up on my insurance money.

SAM

Make sense. I seen dat in da movies sometimes.

HOWARD

Good plan, yeah, yeah . . . Except I don't have insurance. Don't believe in it.

SAM

Wat da hell I doin', talkin' to one dumb guy like you.

HOWARD

You know something? I got my antenna out and I sense in you a certain hostility.

SAM

No shit.

HOWARD

Look, I still don't know your name. I gotta call you something. I told you my name is Howard.

SAM

Sam.

HOWARD

Sam? As in Samuel?

SAM

No, Samson. Getting dark.

HOWARD

We should try to make a fire. Go get some dry twigs. And find a place for the fire. Then I want you to go and get some--what's wrong?

SAM

You ordering me around?

HOWARD

Huh, what?

SAM

You telling me wat fo' do?

HOWARD

Well, somebody has to take charge.

SAM

Why you?

HOWARD

Because, because . . . you understand my English, and I can't fucking tell what the hell you're saying half the time. So it makes more sense that I give the orders and you obey. I mean, English is our majestic language, the language of the Western world, and since I speak it supremely better than you, I should rightly take command.

SAM SQUARES HIS SHOULDERS AND TAKES A BELLIGERENT STANCE.

All right, if you feel that way, I'll get the twigs and start the fire. And I could use that chip on your shoulder.

SAM SITS AND HOWARD GATHERS TWIGS.

See, I'm flexible. I'm trying to be a nice guy. It would help if you did the same. That's the thing about Cindy. She's too rigid, you know, she needs to loosen up and not give me a bad time. Let's face it.

HE RUBS TWO STICKS TOGETHER.

HOWARD

(cont')

She carries around a lot of emotional baggage. I can say the same thing about Lennie. He can be obstinate. Why I don't know. Maybe his parents spoiled him when he was a kid. Probably had everything his way and he can't change now. This might do it.

HE FINALLY GIVES UP WITH THE STICKS.

Damn, we'll never get a fire going.

SAM

You gotta do dat?

HOWARD

How else we gonna have a fire?

SAM

Use one lighta.

SAM TAKES OUT A LIGHTER FROM HIS POCKET.

HOWARD

Why didn't you say you had one?

SAM

Why you neva ask?

HOWARD

Why did I think I would get an intelligent answer?

SAM GETS THE FIRE STARTED.

It's not a big fire. At least we can keep our hands warm.

SAM INSTEAD LIFTS HIS FEET TO WARM THEM.

SAM

I dunno about you, but I still hungry.

HOWARD

We can go without food for da Water we need. I haven't had water sinch breakfast. I don't wanna die of thirst. Believe me, it's a bad way to go. I saw a guy who'd died of thirst in the Sahara. Not a pretty sight. Your tongue swells up. It's like you got a cow's tongue in your mouth. It's ugly, I'm telling you, really, really ugly.

SAM

No start acting up, I get wadda.

HOWARD

Where? You didn't bring any--

SAM

Back dere liddle bit. I neva like bring 'um until I find out who was calling.

HOWARD

Well, now you know. Let's get it.

SAM

You stay here.

HOWARD

Don't leave me.

SAM

Why? You scared stay by yourself?

HOWARD

You may not be able to find your way back, then what? Let's face it, we only have each other. It's really dark out there. Wait, I got a flashlight.

HOWARD DIGS INTO HIS BAG.

Hey, a ball of string. I save string. Learned that from my grandmother. I got an idea. See.

HE TIES THE STRING AROUND SAM'S WAIST.

SAM

Wat dis fo'?

HOWARD

You get lost, I just pull you back.

SAM

Aeh, I ain't no fish.

HOWARD

We gotta stick together. Now you can go. And here's the flashlight.

SAM EXITS. HOWARD SITS ON THE GROUND HOLDING THE STRING, WHICH IS EXTENDED OFFSTAGE. HE LETS OUT MORE OF THE STRING.

You okay, Sam? Can you hear me?

HE LETS OUT MORE OF THE STRING. MOONLIGHT BATHES THE STAGE.

Full moon. Is that good or bad? Sam, you got the water? Sam, you hear me? You okay?

SUDDENLY THE EXTENDED STRING GOES SLACK AND DROPS TO THE GROUND. HOWARD PULLS IN THE STRING. NO SAM. OMINOUS SILENCE, THEN . . .

SAM

(offstage)

No! No! Please! No eat me! No! Aaaaaagggggghhhhh!

HOWARD SHRINKS BACK AND STARES OFFSTAGE, AS SAM ROARS OFFSTAGE, SOUNDING LIKE AN ENRAGED MONSTER. THEN SAM RUSHES IN, LAUGHING.

SAM

I wen' scare you o' wat?

HOWARD

Funny. Real funny.

SAM CARRIES A SMALL CANTEEN AND BURLAP BAG, WHICH CONTAINS LAVA ROCK. HE HANDS THE CANTEEN TO HOWARD.

SAM

No drink too much.

HOWARD TAKES A GULP AND SAM IMMEDIATELY GRABS AWAY THE CANTEEN.

You t'ought one monsta was killing me, eh?

HOWARD

I knew you were kidding. You're not a very good actor.

SAM

No lie, you was scared.

HOWARD

Well, I wasn't scared shitless like you.

SAM

'S 'cause you still full a shit.

HOWARD KICKS HIS BAG, THEN HE REMEMBERS AND RUMMAGES THROUGH THE BAG.

HOWARD

I have a map. Maybe you can read it.

SAM

Cheez, give me da damn ting.

SAM STUDIES THE MAP BRIEFLY.

Dis map no good.

HOWARD

Why not?

SAM

You see dis? 'S one menchune staring out from behind da rock. Dis one stupid tourist souvenir map. No can make head o' tail wit' dis.

SAM THROWS THE MAP AT HOWARD, WHO CAN'T FOLD THE MAP BACK THE RIGHT WAY. IN THE END, HE GIVES UP AND STUFFS THE MAP BACK INTO THE BAG.

HOWARD

Well, Cindy bought it. How would I know?

SAM

Wat else you get in dat bag?

HOWARD

Just things I never threw away. You want underarm deodorant?

SAM

Nah, I no need.

(smells armpit)

Smell good enough. Try smell.

SAM LIFTS BOTH ARMS.

HOWARD

No, thanks.

SAM STICKS A HAND IN THE BAG AND PULLS OUT A SHRUNKEN HEAD. HE SCREAMS AND DROPS IT.

Hey, watch that. It's my shrunken head. My tsanta. That's what they call 'em, tsanta.

SAM

'S real?

HOWARD

Of course. Got it in Ecuador.

HOWARD ADMIRES THE HEAD.

SAM

Came from one real man?

HOWARD

Yeah. You know, the Jivaro were fierce warriors, attacking, killing, then shrinking the heads of men, women, and children. They believe the tsanta has magical powers. And this little guy I have here was a savage Jivaro head hunter maybe a hundred years ago. His name's Walter. That's what I call him. Probably had his own head collection. Now he belongs to me.

SAM

Wat you keeping him fo'?

HOWARD

Good icebreaker.

SAM

You pound ice wit' dat?

HOWARD

No, I bring it out. Girls stare at it. They really get turned on. Mysterious. It has an erotic aura about it. Then the girls go to bed with me.

SAM

'S how you wen' get Cindy?

HOWARD

As a matter of fact--yes.

SAM

'S your trouble. You make love to weird wahine.

HOWARD

It works, though. Every time.

SAM

Maybe Walta like his head back.

HOWARD

Why? He can't use it anymore.

SAM

Maybe his spirit no can res' until he get his head back.

HOWARD

Nah. I don't believe in that mumbo-jumbo . . . You know how they get the head so small?

SAM

Wat you tink you looking at? One scientist?

HOWARD THROWS THE HEAD TO SAM.

HOWARD

Well, I'll tell you. First, they cut a slit behind the head, taking off the skin. Then scrap away the excess flesh. They sew up the eyes and mouth, then boil it in a special solution for a couple of hours until the skin shrinks to the desired size. They sew up the back of the neck, then fill the hole with hot stones and sand. The head is then hung over a fire turning the yellowish skin to black. Beautiful, huh?

SAM

And one big human head turn out li'dat. Poor guy.

HOWARD

Alas, poor Walter, I knew him well. A fierce hunter with many shrunken heads. He had a wife and two boys

in a village deep in the heart of the jungle. Then one day war broke out with another tribe. The fighting was bloody and relentless, and Walter showed remarkable courage and ingenuity in battling the enemy. But one day he was careless. or rather, he was too trusting. For he relied on his good friend to protect his family. Only to have the friend betray him by running away from the enemy and allowing Walter's family to be slaughtered. When Walter discovered the massacre, he went mad and attacked the enemy without mercy until he was cut down with slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

SAM

Dat Walta was some guy. How you know all dis about him?

HOWARD

You like the story of his life?

SAM

Was sad, but make me feel good dat Walta was one real fighta.

HOWARD

Yeah, a mighty warrior of the jungle. Good story, huh. I made it all up with my brilliant imagination.

SAM

You mean da story not true?

HOWARD

Of course not, what do you expect? How would I know the intimate details of Walter's life? He was a stinking primitive Indian living in a steamy jungle and probably didn't have a brain in his head.

SAM

You can bullshit real good, 's all I can say. Walta gotta be mad at you. Someday he going come afta you. Den wat?

HOWARD

I'll tell him, "Walter, sorry your head and body aren't connected anymore, but if you still need a body, you can have mine." Simple, eh? But enough about me and Walter. What's in your bag?

SAM

Jus' rocks.

HOWARD

What kind of rocks?

SAM

Lava. Try look. Get two kinds of lava, you know dat? One kine is called pahoe-hoe, and da odda is called a'a. You know why we call 'um a'a?

HOWARD

No, educate me.

SAM

We call 'um a'a because if you walk on 'um wit' your bare feet, you go, "Ah, ah."

HOWARD

Very funny.

SAM

Aeh, I no kid you. Pahoe hoe lava is mo' smooth and gray colored. A'a is black and rough. Hot lava is 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit. One time one tourist wen' fall into dis whole pool of lava and he went whoosh! Gone, baby.

HOWARD

Are we on safe ground? Can we fall into hot lava?

SAM

Maybe. All depends.

HOWARD

All depends on what?

SAM

If da ground undaneath us is solid.

SAM JUMPS UP AND DOWN ON THE GROUND.

HOWARD

Hey, don't do that, you crazy . . .

SAM

You chicken shit bugga. Dis place okay. If was dangerous, get one sign show people to watch out.

HOWARD RUNS OFFSTAGE AND COMES BACK WITH A SIGN.

HOWARD

Something like this?

IT'S A SIGN WITH A STICK FIGURE OF A MAN FALLING IN A HOLE.

SAM

Yeah, you stupid jerk! Why you neva tell me befo'?

HOWARD

Hell, I didn't know what it meant.

SAM

Man, we in deep shit. Dis is it, I gotta get away from lava, too much lava in my life.

SAM

So why the hell do you collect the rocks?

SAM

I make ashtrays wit' dem.

HOWARD

The kind in the stores?

SAM

Da store kine junk. Mine betta. I sell to tourists by da road. Da personal touch.

HOWARD

Those store ones aren't bad. One caught my eye. It had the face and bust of a beautiful woman that sort of flowed into the side of the ashtray. Yours?

SAM

'Nah. Da kine no good. Dey no use real Hawaiian lava.

HOWARD

What kine of lava do they use?

SAM

I dunno. Maybe not even real lava. Dose guys scare use da lava around here. Dey no like make Pele mad.

HOWARD

Pele? The volcano goddess?

SAM

Pele is the goddess of fire. She live wit' da volcanoes.

HOWARD

Forget it. That's just superstition. Primitive fears.

SAM

You making Pele mad.

HOWARD

Gimme a break. There's no such thing as Pele. Or gods or goddesses. You know that Pele is just a myth, a legend?

SAM

Shaddup! You no catch on yet? We bot' stay get lost. But we no stay lost in one ordinary way. No make sense da way we lost. One minute you walkin' wit' your friends, da next you lost, all alone. Me, one minute I was walkin' pickin' up lava rocks and da next I dunno where I stay. I been here so many times. How come I going be lost? i get da mean feelin' somebody wen' plan all dis.

HOWARD

Who?

SAM

I ain't saying . . . Maybe ghosts.

HOWARD

Ghosts? You're nuts. There's nothing out there.

SAM

Get ghosts all ova da Big Island. I hear lots of stories about ghosts, invisible warriors who march late at night, singing deir war songs.

HOWARD

You seen any ghosts?

SAM

Maybe, maybe not.

HOWARD

What do you mean by that?

SAM

I mean, ghosts can take human form, and you dunno if you talking to one ghost. Maybe you one ghost, one white ghost. For all you know, maybe me one ghost.

HOWARD

Are you a ghost?

SAM

No. Wat about you?

HOWARD

Can I be a ghost and not know it?

SAM

'S possible. Especially one fucked-up bugga like you. But one way, we can tell. I hear ghosts no mo' feet. Dey kinna float above the ground. You can see my feet.

Sam slams a foot onto Howard's foot.

HOWARD

Oooww! What the hell you doing?

SAM

Checking to see if you get feet.

HOWARD

Satisfied? Listen, let's get this straight there are no ghosts because there's nothing up there, down there, on this Earth that remotely resembles a ghost or spirit.

SAM

You one sad case. At least I believe. I believe in many gods. Get all kine gods doing dis or dat. No make dem mad, o' dey going send ghosts afta us. If dey come, you going be sorry.

HOWARD

Okay, for the sake of argument, let's say there are ghosts. Why would ghosts want to waste their time on a jerk like you? I mean, in their eyes you're a jerk, not in mine.

SAM

'Cause dey mad at me.

HOWARD

Why?

SAM

I wen' steal da lava rocks.

HOWARD

It's only rocks, who cares. There's so much lava . . .

SAM

I make tings tourists can buy. I make money from Pele's lava. And all da tourists come and come and come,

and hotels go up and up and up, and pretty soon no mo' natural place anymo'. So das why she makin' Kilauea erupt so much and why she destroying da houses in da way. Get too many mainland and Japanese developers building too many hotels, bringing in too many tourists, too much artificial stuff makin' Hawaii cheap and ugly.

HOWARD

Hey, free enterprise. You gotta work so you can eat. You gotta go with the flow. Make your money while you can. If you don't take care of yourself, who will?

SAM

'S da trouble wit' people like you. You do wrong and you no care. You tink you get da right do anyting you like because you get money and you get power and you use dat power to make me listen to you. You grab me by da balls and you tell me you goin' give me money but I gotta work like one slave fo' you.

HOWARD

No, no, no, believe me. No sir, I wouldn't grab you by the --it's not sanitary.

SAM

Yeah, you would. I know you. Wen I not looking, you come up from behind and stick your hand in dere and squeeze. And you going tell me you doing dis for my own good. And I gotta listen to you because if I no listen you going make me pay and let me suffa and make me eat dirt jus' so I can live. Wat I can do? Wat I can do?

HOWARD

You asking me? You really asking me?

SAM

I dunno. You know da answer?

HOWARD

No.

SAM

'S wat I tought. All your fault, you know dat? I blame you and all da odda people who spoiling Hawaii and no take care a da land.

HOWARD

Like yourself?

SAM

Yeah . . . I doin' wrong and I know I doin' wrong. But I no can help myself because I see everybody makin' money and I tink I gotta get my share 'cause no fair if I gotta starve and my neighbas makin' money and eating good and building new houses. And guys like you making 'um mo' hard on me.

SAM

HOWARD

I don't know. Maybe she's shy.

LANI

(offstage)

I can come see you?

HOWARD

See, it's a friendly voice. Yes, you can come. Please come.

SAM

Maybe she one ghost.

HOWARD

Ghost? Ridiculous.

SAM

Get plenny ghosts in Hawaii. Ghosts like dis island da bes'. She one ghost. Gotta be.

HOWARD

We're friendly. We won't hurt you.

LANI APPEARS AS A LIFE-SIZE PUPPET.

LANI, DRESSED IN A FLOOR-LENGTH, LONG-SLEEVE MUUMUU, ENTERS. HER FEET AREN'T VISIBLE. SAM AND HOWARD ARE FACING THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. SHE IS GRAYHAired AND GRANDMOTHERLY IN APPEARANCE. ALSO WEARS EYEGASSES.

LANI

Oh, hi.

SAM AND HOWARD ARE STARTLED AND SPIN AROUND.

How you? My name is Lani. But please call me Auntie Lani. 'S wat everybody call me.

HOWARD

You don't know how happy we are to see you.

SAM

Aeh, no put me in wit' you.

LANI

I saw you folks from far away and I tought, oh, I wonda wat dey doing ova dere. Maybe I betta go check.

HOWARD

Good thing you did.

LANI

Happy now? I like you be happy.

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah. My name is Howard, Lani.

LANI

Please, Auntie Lani.

HOWARD

Auntie Lani. And this is Sam.

LANI

How you, Samson?

SAM FREEZES.

HOWARD

You're not a rescue party, are you?

LANI

No, why?

HOWARD

'Cause we're lost.

LANI

Awww, you poor tings.

HOWARD

Can you help us?

LANI

Yeah. Wat you like I do?

HOWARD

Can you lead us out of here?

LANI

Dark right now. Maybe wen da sun come up.

HOWARD

Okay, that's fine. We can wait. Right, Sam?

LANI

Wassamadda, you shy?

SAM

How you know ny name Samson? All he said my name was Sam.

LANI

Oh dat. Well, your faddah name was was Sam, yeah?

SAM

Yeah.

LANI

And you da son of Sam, yeah?

SAM

Yeah.

LANI

So your name gotta be Sam-son.

SAM

Wat you tink?

HOWARD

Sounds . . . logical.

SAM

How come one old lady like you stay out here?

LANI

Good fun walk in da dark.

SAM

Where you live?

LANI

Here.

SAM

Where here?

LANI

Here, in dis place.

HOWARD

She lives on this island, what's the big deal?

LANI

Yeah, you. Da haole mo' smart dan you. You no shame o' wat?

HOWARD

Auntie Lani, please sit down.

LANI

Mo' polite too. No, tanks, I not tired. You one tourist, yeah. Where you from?

HOWARD

Maryland. Ever been there?

LANI

No, I live here all my life.

SAM

Live here. You mean, wit' da volcanoes and all da lava.

LANI

Of course. How I going live wit'out da volcanoes?

HOWARD

Ah, wait a minute. You don't live in Hilo or a town like that?

LANI

Waste time da kine place. Mo' betta live by myself out here.

SAM

In one house?

LANI

Fo' wat house. Cave da hes'.

HOWARD

Cave? How could you live in a cave? Doesn't it get cold and damp?

LANI

No bodda me. I can make fire if get too cold. And you know wat I do, I draw pictures on da walls. Look nice. Come see. We go.

SAM

Not now.

LANI

How come?

SAM

Too dark.

LANI

Wat you scared of? No need be scared.

HOWARD

Don't mind Sam, he's afraid of ghosts.

SAM

Shaddup you.

LANI

Samson, ghosts not going kill you. I can tell you dat.

SAM

You sure? You promise?

HOWARD

C'mon, Sam, don't embarrass yourself. What a coward.

LANI

Yeah, Howard. You and me go by ourself.

HOWARD

Me? Just me? No, I can't leave Sam alone.

SAM

Nemmine me, go, go, no feel sorry about me.

LANI

Oh, you gotta come see my lava tube. Come, Howard, you like go?

HOWARD

Sure, when we get out of here. Maybe tomorrow after I freshen up. You know, shower, shave.

LANI

Nemmine dat. We can go now.

HOWARD

Now?

LANI

Not far.

HOWARD

What do you think, Sam?

SAM

I stayin' right here in dis spot.

LANI

O' we can go to my cave. Mo' near.

HOWARD

Why don't we wait till tomorrow?

LANI

Up to you. Den maybe I betta go home myself.

HOWARD

No, please stay.

SAM

Go, Auntie Lani, go. Go home hurry up and go draw pictures on your walls some mo'.

HOWARD

Don't listen to him, He's suffering from some mysterious ailment, I don't know what. Affects his head just a little . . .

LANI

Poor keiki. Okay, I stay.

HOWARD

Thank you.

LANI

You know, da las' time I wen' talk to one haole tourist, he went fall in one big pool of boiling lava.

SAM

Wat? I heard about dat haole. on TV. You was wit' him, eh. You wen' push him in da lava.

LANI

No, not me. Jus' like you folks, I wen' see him in da distance, so I wen' walk to him, and I said: "Mista Nice Man, please watch out fo' da lava. Too dangerous." But he no listen. He jus' laugh and said: "Don't worry, dear old lady, I can take care of myself." He call me one old lady.

SAM

He call you one old lady, so you wen' get mad at him and t'row him in da lava.

LANI

Wassamadda you. I no do da kine stuff. Who you tink me? Dis tourist man had one camera and he was taking pictures and he no look where he was going and den he trip and fall in all by himself. Oooohhh, he scream so loud, make me jump in da air.

SAM PULLS HOWARD ASIDE.

SAM

Howard.

SAM

You know who dat?

HOWARD

Some old lady named Auntie Lani.

SAM

No kid yourself. She one ghost. She no look funny to you? Like she not human. Her face, her body, da way she move. Jus' like one ghost. And see how da muumuu dress hide her feet? She hiding 'um 'cause wahine ghost no mo' feet. Like I said, dey jus' float above da ground.

HOWARD

I admit she's not your run-of-the-mill old lady. But a ghost, a spirit? I can't swallow that. She hasn't done anything supernatural.

SAM

She give me chicken skin, you know.

HOWARD

Chicken skin? Did you say chicken skin? What does that mean?

SAM

You know.

SAM PICKS AT HIS ARM AND SHIVERS.

HOWARD

Oh, you mean, goose bumps. Now if you had said goose bumps like we do on the mainland, I would've understood right away. So maybe you should say goose bumps from now on.

SAM

No, I mean chicken skin. No try change da way I talk. I like talk da way I talk. Wen I say chicken skin, I mean chicken skin, not goose bumps. Chicken and goose two diffrent birds. Undastand? So wat we going do wit' da ghost ova dere?

HOWARD

Prove to me Auntie Lani's a ghost.

SAM

'S not going be easy.

HOWARD

Why not?

SAM

'Cause ghosts not stupid. She been around. You might be safe. I tink she afta only me. Because of da lava rocks.

LANI

Wat in dis bag?

SHE'S ABOUT TO TOUCH SAM'S BAG.

SAM

No touch dat!

LANI

Wat? Someting secret?

SAM

Yeah, yeah. Belong to Howard.

HOWARD

What?

SAM

Wat you care, you no believe in ghosts.

HOWARD

But that's not honest. Tell the truth.

SAM

Wat about da bull shit in your travel stories?

HOWARD

That's different. That's commercial bull shit.

SAM

You scared, eh?

HOWARD

Not of her. She's harmless.

LANI

No, dis not Howard's bag. Belong to you, Samson.

SAM'S LEGS ALMOST BUCKLE.

Wat get inside?

SAM

Nuttin'.

SAM PICKS UP THE BAG AND RUNS TO HIDE IT.

SAM

Jus' some junk.

AUNTIE LANI IS CLEARLY AGITATED AND TREMBLES VIOLENTLY.

HOWARD

Auntie Lani, want some water to drink?

AUNTIE LANI NODS EAGERLY AND DRINKS TWO GULPS FROM THE CANTEEN WITH HOWARD'S HELP.

LANI

Hmmm, ono. Water and fire, 's my two fav'rite tings. Especially wen da lava flow into the sea and all da steam rise up. Make me feel good. And da fragrance of da ohia blossoms give me peace. But sometimes I get so sad. You like know why?

HOWARD

Oh yeah, tell us. We really want to know.

LANI

Sometimes I get so sad wen I tink how hard fo' Hawaii people nowdays. And I see so many of dem going away, moving far off to some distant land where no mo' aloha in da heart, because no mo' place in Hawaii fo' dem anymore. And the red-hot tears of lava flow out from my eyes of sorrow.

SAM WEEPS NOISILY.

You folks hungry? I get some food if you like eat.

HOWARD

Yes, I haven't eaten since this morning.

LANI

Good. I get plenny ono kau kau.

HOWARD

Cow cow? You mean like moo moo? Yeah, I want a porterhouse steak.

LANI SHAKES VIOLENTLY LIKE ROLLING THUNDER, THEN DISSOLVES INTO LAUGHTER.

LANI

Oh, Howard, you so funny.

HOWARD

I'm glad you think so.

LANI

Samson, why you so quiet? You shame o' wat? You ack like you wen' do someting wrong. Wassamadda you. Laugh liddle bit. No make da kine face.

HOWARD

Yeah, Sam, lighten up.

LANI

Come, Howard, help me bring da food. Stay jus' ova dere. We go.

SAM

No, take me. You like me, not him.

LANI

I like bot' of you. I take care of you too, no worry.

HOWARD

We both can go.

SAM

Stay here if you know wat good fo' you.

LANI

Aeh, no fight, eh. Get plenny kau kau fo' everybody.

HOWARD

Yeah, Sam. You get da fire going bigger and we'll cook some meat.

SAM

Auntie Lani, we go now befo' I change my mind.

(To Howard)

You on your own. If I no come back, you know why.

LANI AND SAM EXIT UPSTAGE RIGHT. HOWARD WATCHES, THEN TAKES A DRINK FROM THE CANTEEN. HE PACES AROUND THE FIRE, LOOKING UPSTAGE RIGHT. THEN SUDDENLY:

LANI

(OFFSTAGE)

Nnnnnnoooooooo! Nnnnnnnnnnoooooooo! Aeeeeeeiiiiiiiiigggggggghhhh!

HOWARD

Lani! Lani! What's going on? Sam! Sam!

SAM RUNS OUT SCREAMING AND ROLLS ON THE GRUND. HE SEEMS IN SHOCK, CRAWLS TO GET THE CANTEEN FOR A DRINK.

Sam, what the hell happened? Where's Auntie Lani? Answer me, where's--

SAM

She ma-ke.

HOWARD

She ma-kay?

SAM

Yeah, ma-ke. You deaf o' wat?

HOWARD

Ma-kay? Ma-kay? You idiot! What the fuck does ma-kay mean?

SAM

She ma-ke, die, dead.

HOWARD

Dead? She screamed. Why'd she scream? How'd she die?

SAM

Shaddup wit' your stupid questions. Ma-ke is ma-ke.

HOWARD

You killed her.

SAM

Who told you?

HOWARD

Nobody had to tell me. It was just you and her out there.

SAM

Wat if I told you one pupule

(crazy)

guy wen' come in and kill her?

HOWARD

There was no pu-pu-lee guy, whatever pu-pu-lee means, and I don't give a damn what pu-pu-lee means, because you don't speak proper English you did it, you killed her, you, you blow-my-mind ignoramus!

SAM

If ignoramus mean someting no good, I going kill you right now.

HOWARD

You killed Auntie Lani, didn't you? Didn't you?

SAM

Yeah, dammit. Now what da hell ignoramus mean?

HOWARD

Ignoramus means handsome, strong, too-good-to-be-true human being . . . Why'd you kill her?

SAM

Because neva get food. She only said dat so she could get me ova dere and kill me. She was one ghost, so I hadda kill her.

HOWARD

She couldn't have been a ghost. You can't kill a ghost, don't you understand? A ghost is a spirit, she can't die. Because she's already dead, you fool! You killed a poor, defenseless old lady who only wanted to help us.

SAM

But she wen' give me da stink eye.

HOWARD

Stink eye? What, her eye smelled? What the hell is a stink eye?

SAM GLARES AT HOWARD WITH ONE EYE FOCUSED SQUARELY ON HIM,

Is that all? You killed a human being because she looked at you like this.

HOWARD GIVES HIM THE STINK EYE.

HOWARD

(cont')

Are you nuts? Are you without a brain? What's wrong with you?

SAM

Yeah, you right. I wen' choke one old lady and she wen' die. But she no can die. She one spirit. I wen' kill one old lady fo' nuttin'.

HOWARD

Yes, you stupid ignoramus . . . you too good to be true human being. But you are in deep trouble, man. If you're right about there being a God, then go down on your knees and pray to God for forgiveness. 'Cause

when we get rescued, I'm sorry, but I gotta report this. I'll say maybe you were temporarily insane, that's not far from the truth, and maybe you'll get involuntary manslaughter or something like that. I don't know exactly 'cause I'm no lawyer. But judging from what I read in the papers, you'll probably get six months in jail and get out on parole for good behavior, or some crap like that.

SAM

'S if we get rescued, and if you still alive.

HOWARD

Don't get any ideas. I'm on your side. We need each other. Besides, how do we know Lani is really dead?

SAM

I should know. I wen' kill her.

HOWARD

Maybe you just choked her into unconsciousness. Maybe she's still alive.

SAM

Nah, she dead.

HOWARD

I'll go check. Here, I'm tying the string around my waist. I'll take the flashlight and find my way.

SAM

Okay, you gotta go left, right, left, behind one big rock. She lying dere flat on her back.

HOWARD

Okay, ready. Don't let go of the string.

SAM

No worry. Watch out now. Once you get out dere, everyting going look kapakahi, you know, all mix up.

HOWARD

Right. I gotcha. If things get too kapahiki, I'll call out to you and you reel me back.

SAM

Check.

HOWARD DISAPPEARS INTO THE NIGHT.

HOWARD

(OFFSTAGE)

Okay, I see the big rock ahead.

LANI

(offstage)

Saaaammmssssooonnn.

SAM TURNS AND SEES NOTHING. RELIEVED, HE HUMS A LITTLE. KUROKO NOW ENTERS WITH LANI'S HEAD OF A STICK.

Samson, you see wat you did. You broke off my head wen you choke me. Wat you going say?

SAM

Where da rest of your body?

LANI'S HEAD CIRCLES SAM.

LANI

Stay resting ova dere.

SAM

You one ghost, yeah?

LANI

No.

SAM

Gotta be.

LANI

Maybe me jus' in your imagination.

SAM

Oh yeah? Den I like imagine you go put your head back on your body.

LANI

Why?

SAM

Look mo' natural dat way.

LANI

Dat body too heavy. I feel mo' free li'dis.

SAM

Why you come back fo'?

LANI

I like see you.

SAM

Well, I no like see you. Go way.

LANI

Only if you come wit' me.

SAM

Sorry. Wen I go home, I gotta go fishing.

LANI

I lonesome.

SAM

Go get married. Old lady like you, you can find one old bugga keep you company,

LANI

I like you betta.

SAM

Me too young fo' you.

LANI

I no tink so.

SAM

I no can go out wit' only one head. No nuff. Gotta get one body too.

LANI

You hard to please, yeah.

SAM

Wat you going do to me?

LANI

Oooooooooohhhhhh, oooooooooohhhhhh!

(singsong)

I not going do nuttin'.

SAM

You promise?

LANI

I have to promise? You no trust me?

HOWARD

(offstage)

Sam! Sam! I found it!

SAM PULLS ON THE STRING QUICKLY AND HOWARD, CARRYING A CARDBOARD BOX, COMES RUSHING IN BACKWARD AND FALLS.

What's the matter with you?

SAM

You said if you call out to pull you back.

HOWARD

That's if I was in trouble.

SAM

You said you wen' find da body.

HOWARD

No, I found this box of food. The food was there, just as Lani said.

SAM

But where was Lani's body?

HOWARD

I told you. Lani wasn't there. Lani . . . wasn't . . . I don't know.

SAM

Because Lani is one ghost and her head stay right behind you. Try look.

KUROKO HIDES LANI'S HEAD.

HOWARD

See what? There's nothing there.

SAM

Oh, da head wen' disappear.

LANI'S HEAD REAPPEARS.

But da head stay behind you again. Look quick.

HOWARD TURNS AND THE KUROKO HIDES THE HEAD AGAIN.

HOWARD

Wait, you're saying just Lani's head is here, and not the body?

SAM

Right.

HOWARD

How come I don't see the head?

SAM

Da head disappear wen you look.

HOWARD

Why?

SAM

I dunno. Maybe she shame. Da head no look too good wit'out da body. Ask her. Auntie Lani, show your head to Howard.

LANI'S HEAD REAPPEARS BEHIND HOWARD. LANI SHAKES HER HEAD.

HOWARD

Don't tell me. Her head is back?

SAM

Yeah. Behind you.

HOWARD

Sam, your mind has finally snapped. You need help. Unfortunately I can't give it to you, you brainless nitwit.

SAM

I can see wat I see. I no need one brain fo' dat. Lani right dere.

HOWARD

No, no, that's not it. I think Lani regained consciousness and crawled away . . . to her cave.

SAM

You believe wat you like and I believe wat I see.

HOWARD

If Lani is a ghost, how come she left food for us? Why not punish us? Why give us food?

SAM

How I know? I dunno how one ghost tink.

KUROKO TAPS SAM ON THE HEAD WHEN HOWARD ISN'T LOOKING.

SAM

Aeh, why you hit me fo'?

HOWARD

I didn't touch you.

SAM

I not talking to you. I talking to Lani's head.

KUROKO MANEUVERS BEHIND HOWARD NOW.

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah, dream on, you crazy bastard.

KUROKO RAPS HOWARD ON THE HEAD.

Hey, that hurt.

SAM

I neva touch you. Was Lani's head.

KUROKO DRIFTS AWAY WITH THE HEAD AS SAM WATCHES.

Dere da head going, going, gone.

HOWARD

Just my luck. Trapped in the land of nowhere with a demented jackass. Anyway, this is real food. I'm eating this, it's good.

HOWARD EATS A MORSEL OF FOOD.

SAM

How you know not poison?

HOWARD

Poison?

SAM

Maybe she wen' leave poison food, so you eat 'um and die one slow painful death. Like one big, fat ugly rat wit' da guts burning up inside, and you twisting your body into one pretzel 'cause--

HOWARD SPITS OUT THE FOOD.

Aeh, no make a mess, eh.

HOWARD

It's not poison.

SAM

You wish. Da poison probably going t'rough your body right now. Soon as you put da food in your mout', you one dead man. How you feelin'? Your mout' dry? How your toes feel?

HOWARD QUICKLY TAKES OFF HIS SHOES AND FEELS HIS TOES.

Try walk around. C'mon, Howard, walk, walk, get up and walk, I like see. C'mon. See if you can walk.

HOWARD WALKS TENDERLY ON THE LAVA GROUND. IT'S OBVIOUS HIS FEET AREN'T ACCUSTOMED TO WALKING ON ROUGH TERRAIN.

HOWARD

Ah ah, ah ah.

SAM

'S wat I tought. You tourists all get sof' baby feet. 'S wat you get, wearing shoes all da time. Feet gotta be strong like mine.

SAM STICKS OUT HIS ROUGH AND READY FEET.

Tough and dry like 8-year-old beef jerky.

HOWARD

I'm dying and you're admiring your ugly, smelly feet. I don't wanna die. You die, not me.

SAM

Aeh, no look at me li'dat. I neva tell you eat poison. Aeh, aeh, wat dat? No give me da stink eye. I give you stink eye right back.

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER. SAM LEANS FORWARD AND INTENSIFIES HIS GLARE. THEY CIRCLE EACH OTHER WARILY.

HOWARD

I got a lot more to offer the world than you. You're a worthless, pathetic, hopeless creature and I'm a bright, intelligent, creative writer.

SAM

No give me dat crap, you pilau . . .

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah, make me laugh. I cringe at your monumental stupidity.

SAM

Go 'head, brah, talk like one stink mongoose. Make me laugh, you crazy--

THEY'RE CHOKING EACH OTHER, GRAPPLING AND CIRCLING, THEN ROLLING ON THE GROUND.

HOWARD

Die, scum!

SAM

Ma-ke, moe lepo!

A RUMBLE BEGINS. THE GROUND IS SHAKING. AN EARTHQUAKE! THE MEN STOP FIGHTING AND BRACE THEMSELVES. THEY STAND AND HUG EACH OTHER AS THE NOISE GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER.

NOW THE RUMBLING SUBSIDES.

THEN OFFSTAGE, AROUND THE THEATER, THERE IS THE SOFT, CARESSING LAUGHTER OF A WOMAN. ITS SIREN-LIKE QUALITY IS MESMERIZING.

THE MEN SEPARATE AND LISTEN.

THE LAUGHTER TURNS SENSUOUS AND INVITING, THEN FADES AWAY. .

HOWARD

Funny kine, yeah, dat. Where da laugh wen' come from? No can tell where. Ova here, ova dere, behind, in front. One real sexy kine laugh . . . really someting, yeah.

SAM CAN'T HELP STARING AT HOWARD IN DISBELIEF.

Wat you lookin' at? My body stink o' wat? Chee, dis bugga, Aeh, you give me chicken skin da way you lookin' at me. No look li'dat, I said. You like I broke you mout', you . . . you . . . you like I broke you mout', wwaaaaaa, nnnaaa, mmaa!

FINALLY HOWARD REALIZES HIS SPEECH IS DIFFERENT. HE STICKS HIS TONGUE OUT AND WAGS IT SIDE TO SIDE, UP AND DOWN.

Aaaaaaaahhhhhh, oooooohhhhhhhh, wwwwaaaaa. I . . . I . . . I no can talk, I mean, I . . . no . . . can . . . talk.

HOWARD STANDS WITH HIS MOUTH WIDE OPEN, BEWILDERED. SAM PEERS INTO HOWARD'S MOUTH, THEN BACKS AWAY CAUTIOUSLY.

HOWARD

(cont')

Why I talkin' dis way? I one haole, right? Haoles no can talk li'dis, especially one smart haole like me. Aeh, c'mon, I need your kokua? Kokua? I dunno wat kokua mean. How come I using words I dunno . . . Try wait . . . try wait?

HOWARD DIGS INTO HIS BAG FOR A MIRROR TO LOOK AT HIMSELF.

I still look like me. But I no talk like me. I talk like you.

SAM

You're stating the obvious, you idiot. Look, if you're trying to make fun of the way we locals speak, well, I don't appreciate it.

HOWARD IS STAGGERED.

For one thing, it's our natural way of talking, a part of our heritage and if you persist in speaking that way, I'll have to turn your lights off . . . What did I just say? I said if you continue to . . . if you . . . dare speak . . . that is, I mean, why the hell am I speaking like some fool Caucasian? I know better than that. I mean, I don't know how to speak like a white person and yet, why am I . . .

BOTH ARE PERPLEXED.

Wait, wait, let's try to figure this out rationally.

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah, lemme talk liddle bit, okay? I get some ideas.

SAM

Forget it, your ungrammatical English grates on my ears.

HOWARD

Aeh, not my fault, eh. I neva ask fo' talk li'dis.

SAM

My heart bleeds for you, you sorry excuse for a human being nincompoop.

HOWARD

Aeh, no use dat word on me. Not fair.

SAM

Life isn't fair.

HOWARD

Aeh, I wen' graduate from University Maryland. I not supposed to talk li'dis.

SAM

Hey, I only went to the sixth grade. You know why?

HOWARD

I no give a shit. And no try talk like me befo' I wen' start talkin' like you.

SAM

Hey, fella, lighten up, man. Be cool, don't drool.

SAM IS SURPRISED BY HIS NEW LANGUAGE SKILLS.

HOWARD

Me da educated one. I da one gotta talk good English.

SAM

Well, why don't you? I'm not stopping you. On the contrary, I would prefer to converse with you on a more sophisticated level. However, it's obvious you're capable only of elucidating at a very elementary level. You're an intellectual wasteland.

HOWARD

Fuck you!

SAM

Exactly.

HOWARD

Kukae head!

SAM

Precisely.

HOWARD

Wat kukae head mean?

SAM

It's vulgar. But coming from you I'm not surprised.

HOWARD

No blame me, I dunno wat I saying. How long I gotta talk li'dis? Not natural. I like talk da way I used to talk. But how?

SAM

I could teach you.

HOWARD

Nah, nah, nah, nah, waste time you.

SAM

Suit yourself.

HOWARD

What I going do? Wat I going do?

SAM

I could teach you to make lava ashtrays. On the other hand, with my newfound speech I'll probably be too busy in my new career.

HOWARD

Wat new career?

SAM

A guru. A saintly islander who can now impart his wisdom of life to gullible zombies like you who hunger for guidance like little docile sheep. Let's face it, you need all the help you can get, you're so screwed up.

HOWARD

Aeh, aeh, aeh, da only ting wrong wit' me now is I talk funny kine. Why you no talk like me. C'mon, c'mon, brah. Try talk li'dis. I like hear.

SAM

I can if I want.

HOWARD

No bullshit me. You one sad case. You one local boy and you no can talk pidgin. Make ass, man, make ass.

SAM

Say all you want. I'll just gather my disciples around me and go to Oregon and build a sanctuary for my believers. Oh, I've come so far from my days as a carver of ashtrays.

HOWARD

You tink you so smart, but all you know is how to bulai your way around wit' your mout'. You know how you sound, you sound so--

SAM

I sound the way you used to talk. And you don't like it do you? It pains your moronic ass that I'm now better than you. I love it! I love it! I am the superior being radiating pure joy.

HOWARD

You not smarta dan me, no way, you pilau . . . pilau . . . pilau . . .

SAM

How does it feel to be up against a brick wall? Don't like it, do you? You're not an intellectual hotshot anymore.

HOWARD

I going kill you, kill you . . .

SAM

Yeah? Yeah? C'mon, see what you can do, you punk!

HOWARD

Ma-ke, die, dead. ma-ke, die, dead.

SAM

Oh Cindy, oh Lennie, help! You pathetic s`o`b` Words fail you and you wanna attack. Violence is all you know.

HOWARD

I smell blood. I like taste blood. Lemme bite you.

SAM

Bite yourself, mad dog, give yourself rabies.

AS THE TWO MEN CLASH, THE SAME SENSUOUS LAUGHTER OF A WOMAN FLOWS OUT AGAIN ACCOMPANIED BY BEAUTIFUL MUSIC. THE MEN TRY TO BLOCK OUT THE SOUND BUT SEEM ALMOST HYPNOTIZED BY THE MUSIC AND VOICE.

SAM AND HOWARD LOOK IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. BUT FROM UPSTAGE ENTERS THE LARGER-THAN-LIFE PUPPET OF A BEAUTIFUL LOCAL WOMAN IN A FLOOR-LENGTH HOLOKU. HER LONG BLACK HAIR GLISTENS. SHE GLIDES OUT TO THEM.

SARAH

Hello.

THE TWO MEN ARE STARTLED. THEY SPIN AROUND.

A lovely night. Wait. I know exactly what you're going to say. That my voice is so beautiful that it sounds supernatural. But really it's only the wind.

HOWARD

Where you wen' come from?

SARAH

From my home.

HOWARD

Where your home?

SARAH

My name is Sarah. Who are you?

SAM

Who are we? I don't know anymore. Who are you?

SARAH

Who am I?

HOWARD

Nemmine, nemmine, I no like know.

SARAH

Strange. You look like a haole tourist but you sound local. And you look local but you sound like a mainland haole.

SAM

Very perceptive.

HOWARD

Very funny kine. You talk good English. I used to talk like you, but I no can now.

SARAH

Why not?

HOWARD

Beat da hell outta me. Sam used to talk da way I talk now, but now he talk da way I used to talk. All

kapakahi. You know wat kapakahi mean?

SARAH

Of course, I'm a local girl.

HOWARD

'S good, 'cause I dunno wat da hell I saying.

SARAH

I don't believe you. It's not nice to fool --

SAM

No, it's the truth. For whatever reason, Howard is now a babbling idiot.

HOWARD

Aeh, aeh, me not dumb.

(To Sarah)

Dis bugga get big mout' and small brain. Good fo' nuttin' him.

SAM

Keep it up, Howie baby, and you'll get a fat lip to go with your fat head.

HOWARD

Yeah? Go suck rocks, go pound sand, go eat ukus, go--.

SARAH

Who's going to kill whom, please tell me. I want to know.

HOWARD

No worry, he jus' piss off 'cause I mo' smart dan him. He all show you know, he dunno nuttin'. Da bugga neva even finish high school. Make ass, yeah?

SAM

Hey, can't you shut up. You have to know your place in society and it's not with me or Sarah. Got it?

HOWARD

Kiss my ass, brah, kiss my ass.

SAM

Incorrigible.

HOWARD

Aeh, no use words you no unnastand.

SAM

Uncouth lout.

HOWARD

Aeh, aeh, aeh!

SARAH

Excuse me. What's in the bag?

HOWARD

Yeah, yeah, try look. 'S Sam's bag. Ha, ha, ha. Yeah, Sam. Tell her wat you hiding.

SARAH

No, Howard. I want to see inside your bag.

HOWARD

Mine? You like see mine? Oh, mine no mo' nuttin'. One mirror, see, one ball string, unda-arm fo' your da kine, you like try?

SARAH

No, thank you. What about that?

HOWARD

Dat? Wat dat? No mo' dat.

SARAH

That.

KUROKO BRINGS OUT SHRUNKEN HEAD ON A STICK.

HOWARD

Oh dat.

SAM

Oh, man, another floating head.

HOWARD

Aeh, how you do dat, Sarah. You one magician o' wat?

SARAH

I'm not doing anything. The head rose by itself.

HOWARD

No can be, eh. Gotta be magic. Or else how you can explain?

SARAH

Wait. The head is sending me a message.

HOWARD

Da head? No, no, da head no mo' nuttin' inside. Only stones and sand. Da head no mo' brains so cannot--

SARAH

Quiet!!!

KUROKO THRUSTS THE HEAD UP AND DOWN IN THE AIR.

The head is angry.

SAM

No kidding.

HOWARD

Da head talking to you?

SARAH

The head can't talk. Its mouth is sewn shut. It communicates through telepathy. Yes, yes, I hear your thoughts . . . Go, then. Go and find your peace.

KUROKO EXITS WITH THE HEAD.

SAM

I never saw so many floating heads in my life.

HOWARD

Da head no can float away like dat, eh? Wat was? I know. Da wind, yeah, Da wind wen' make 'um sail away li'dat. Gotta be da wind.

SAM

An ill wind blows.

SARAH

A fair wind caresses.

SAM

Come with me.

SAM AND SARAH GO OGG TO ONE SIDE.

HOWARD

Aeh, I neva finish yet. I get plenny mo' fo' say. Eh, fo'get it. Aeh, Sarah, no listen to dat guy, eh, he only mout'. Me da one wit' da education. me da one wit' da smart head.

SARAH

I can't believe he attended a mainland university.

SAM

School standards are dropping every day. Morons graduate all the time now.

SARAH

And you speak so well, like a haole. You must've lived on the mainland.

SAM

No, no, I've lived on the Big Island all my life. Never left here.

SARAH

You're so amazing. I can't believe you. How do you make a living, Samson?

A COLD CHILL SHOOTS UP SAM'S SPINE.

SAM

Me? Oh . . . I do whatever it is people on the Big Island do. You know . . . And one thing we don't do is make lava ashtrays. Especially Hawaiian lava ashtrays because, you know, that is a bad thing to do. Yes, yes, Big Island people do a lot of things, and I do the same things whatever it is that people do on this lovely island, the island we call the Big Island, although we probably should've called it the Biggest Island.

SARAH

You're nervous, aren't you?

SAM

No, no, I'm okay, you're okay. I mean, why should I be nervous? There's nothing to be nervous abut. Well, we are lost. You know the way out, I hope?

SARAH

Yes, we're not far from safety, if that's what you mean.

SAM

Yeah, that's what I mean. Yes, yes, good, very good.

SARAH

But before you're rescued, I think you should dispose of Howard.

SAM

Dispose? As in--

SARAH

Death. Kill.

SAM

Murder?

SARAH

Pure and simple.

SAM

Why?

SARAH

You prefer to spend the rest of eternity with him? Wouldn't that be hell?

SAM

Yes. But kill him?

SARAH

Can you speak pidgin English?

SAM

Why? If I don't, you'll get mad at me, is that it? Of course, I can speak pidgin, after all I'm a local guy.

SARAH

Talk pidgin with me. I'm a local girl.

SAM

Well, sure. But what for? I mean, it's difficult to just talk pidgin for no good reason.

SARAH

I bet you can't speak pidgin at all.

SAM

Sure I can. Okay, okay, I'll show you.

SAM PREPARES ELABORATELY, CLEARING HIS THROAT, RUBBING HIS FACE. HE LEANS FORWARD AND GOES "COO, COO, COO" LIKE A PIGEON.

SARAH

Having fun at my expense, Samson?

SAM

No, no, don't get mad. Be happy, okay? I'm happy. I am just so happy. Do you know Auntie Lani?

SARAH

Auntie Lani? No. Who is she?

SAM

Oh, ah, Howard mentioned her. I'm going to talk to the guy, okay? He's screwed up over there. Excuse me.

SAM RUSHES OVER TO HOWARD.

HOWARD

Wat? I neva ask you fo' come.

SAM

I know, I know. I had to talk to you.

HOWARD

Oh yeah? 'Smadda, Sarah no like talk to you o' wat?

SAM

Listen to me. Sarah says she doesn't know Auntie Lani.

HOWARD

So? You told her you wen' try kill Auntie Lani?

SAM

No.

HOWARD

You told her you t'ought Auntie Lani was one ghost?

SAM

Sarah knew my name is Samson.

HOWARD

So wat?

SAM

Don't you get it? Both Auntie Lani and Sarah knew my name was Samson and I didn't tell them.

HOWARD

Oooh, make me scared. So wat da hell you talkin' to me fo'? No bodda me already. You one real chicken shit bugga, you know dat?

SAM

Wait. I think Sarah's a ghost too.

HOWARD

You pupule

(crazy),

's all, brah, you pupule. Okay, okay, okay, I going talk to her myself and prove to you she not one ghost.

HOWARD SAUNTERS OFF TO SARAH. HE CARRIES THE BOX OF FOOD. SAM TURNS AWAY TO PONDER HIS PREDICAMENT.

Aeh, ah, Sarah, you hungry? Here, go eat liddle bit.

SARAH

Nah, no t'anks. I not hungry.

HOWARD

Wat you jus' said?

SARAH

I said my opu full. No need kau kau yet.

HOWARD

Ah, you know you talkin' funny kine now?

SARAH

I talkin' okay. Wassamadda wit' da way I talk?

HOWARD

Before you used to talk good English. Now you sound like me.

SARAH

Make us feel mo' close, yeah. If only us two, mo' betta talk li'dis.

HOWARD

Yeah. Da bugga tink he hot shit because he can talk good English. Piss me off.

SARAH

No can help, yeah. People dunno dat da mos' important ting is wat come from da heart, not from da mout'.

HOWARD

Yeah, you right. My heart is betta dan his mout'.

SARAH

Why you tink I talkin' li'dis to you? Because I like be your friend. I no like Samson, he one stuck-up bugga. He tink he too good. You know wat he said about you?

HOWARD

No, wat?

SARAH

He said you too stupid to live. So he gotta kill you.

HOWARD

Wat? Da dirty bugga. He like kill me? Wat I did to him? Nuttin'. I was always good to him.

SARAH

I know dat. Da bugga dangerous. I tink you betta kill him firs'.

HOWARD

Me? I dunno how. I mean I no mo' gun o' knife o' . . . and I no tink I strong enough to choke him. You know wat I mean?

SARAH

Lemme tink. How you can kill him?

HOWARD

Ah, I can tell you someting.

SARAH

Sure. I get my ears wide open fo' you.

HOWARD

You know Sam, he tink you one ghost.

SARAH

Wat he tinkin'? No mo' head, eh, da guy?

SARAH TWISTS HER HEAD AROUND TO LOOK AT SAM, SO THE HEAD IS BACKWARD ON HER SHOULDERS. HOWARD STARES IN DISBELIEF.

Look at Samson, he tink he so smart. Waste time da guy.

HOWARD

How you make your head stay li'dat?

SARAH'S HEAD SPINS FORWARD.

SARAH

Wat?

HOWARD

You know, your head wen' spin around but your body neva move . . .

SARAH

No can. Optical illusion. Your eyes fooling you.

HOWARD

Oh, yeah, yeah. Try look wat Sam doing?

SARAH'S HEAD AGAIN TURNS AROUND.

HOWARD BENDS OVER TO LOOK UNDER SARAH'S HOLOKU (LONG DRESS).

SARAH'S HEAD SPINS BACK.

SARAH

Shame on you, Howard, You was trying to look under my holoku.

HOWARD

No, no. I . . . I . . .

SARAH

You got one good look? You like see some mo'?

SARAH RISES HIGH INTO THE AIR.

Look all you like.

SARAH'S HOLOKU ENVELOPES HOWARD'S HEAD.

HOWARD

Aaaaaaeeeehehhhh!

SARAH COMES DOWN AS HOWARD EMERGES STILL SCREAMING. HE SCRAMBLES TO SAM ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES.

SAM

What's wrong?

HOWARD

You know wat you said about female ghosts no mo' feet?

SAM

Yeah.

HOWARD

I was unda Sarah's dress and I saw everyting.

SAM

So what'd you see?

HOWARD

Nuttin'.

SAM

What? You said you saw everything.

HOWARD

'S right. I saw everyting, but no mo' nuttin'. no mo' feet, no mo' body too.

SARAH MOVES TOWARD THE TWO, HER HEAD STILL ON BACKWARD.

SARAH

Don't listen to Howard. He's delirious.

HOWARD

Oh yeah? How come your head stay on backwards again?

SARAH

Oh that.

KUROKO TURNS HEAD TO FRONT.

You're so picky. Picky, picky, picky. It's just that I have this pain in my neck and every so often I have to stretch it a little.

SAM

I got a question.

SARAH

Yes, yes, please ask. I want to erase all doubts in your mind.

SAM

Why're you floating in mid-air?

SARAH

Am I? Oh, excuse me.

KUROKO BRINGS SARAH DOWN TO THE MEN'S LEVEL.

It's the air currents. I'm just so light that sometimes the currents lift me up and I float. Isn't that funny?

SAM

Yeah, ha, ha, ha, you make me laugh, and you make me want to scream for my mother.

SARAH

Kilauea is going to erupt. Then the lava will come, destroying everything in its path.

SAM

What about us?

SARAH

It's too late.

HOWARD

Too late? Why too late? Wat time now? I can catch up. I get fas' feet.

BILLOWS OF STEAM RISE UPSTAGE. A LOUD RUMBLE CROSSES THE STAGE. SARAH EXITS BACKWARD.

THE RUMBLE GROWS VERY LOUD. FISSURES IN ROCKS GLOW RED.

SAM

Lava!

SAM AND HOWARD SPIN AROUND HELPLESSLY, YELLING.

KUROKO ENTERS HOLDING A JIVARO MASK.

HOWARD PLOPS TO HIS KNEES AS KUROKO APPROACHES WITH MASK. HOWARD IS TRANSFIXED AS THE KUROKO FITS THE MASK ONTO HOWARD, WHO EMITS A HARROWING SCREAM AS THE JIVARO MASK BECOMES HIS HEAD.

HOWARD'S EYES DART SIDE TO SIDE IN HORROR. HIS HANDS CLUTCH AT HIS THROAT.

SAM

Howard. What happened to you? Can you talk?

HOWARD JUST GROWLS.

Wait a minute. Are you Howard or Walter? Either way you're an interesting, psychological study.

HOWARD CONTINUES TO GROWL

The fascinating things I could do with you. But first I have to teach you English. I'll teach you to do things for me until we get rescued. If we get rescued. We have time. Lots and lots of time. First, yes, I'll teach you the alphabet. You have to learn English in order to obey me and follow my orders. I am your master.

HOWARD LOOKS MENACINGLY AT SAM; HIS GROWL IS MORE ANIMATED.

Hey, hey, don't get overly excited. Okay, the alphabet. A` Say A` Come on, you ignorant savage, say A, B, C . . . A! B! C!

HOWARD JUMPS SAM AND THEY CHOKE EACH OTHER, STRUGGLING BACK AND FORTH AS VOLCANIC ASHES FALL ON THEM, THE VOLCANO ROARS IN FURY AND ROCKS GLOW RED MENACINGLY.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO BLACK IN THE TUMULT.

THE END

(END OF PLAY)